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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR UNDERScores EDUCATION SUPPORT IN MARAWI CITY

¶1. Summary. During a May 27 visit to Marawi City, the Ambassador demonstrated continued U.S. support for education development programs in a predominantly Muslim area of conflict-affected central Mindanao. She welcomed the start of a new school year by showcasing the continued strong education partnerships between the region and the United States. The Ambassador engaged local Marawi officials, NGO leaders, and academics on peacemaking and sustainable development issues while emphasizing the importance of continued support for academic and professional development of youth and adults of all ages. The visit was widely covered by regional media, along with some national newspapers. End summary.

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VISIT TO JSOTF-P EDUCATION PROGRAM STRENGTHENS TIES  
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¶2. The Ambassador visited a Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) Civil Action Program that is training 40 teachers from Lanao del Sur province to improve their English-based curriculum skills. The Ambassador noted the importance of giving teachers better tools with which to increase their educational impact in the classrooms of Central Mindanao, and expressed strong U.S. support for the influence of these Education Civil Action Programs on hundreds of teachers in the region. The event served as an example of the strong linkage between U.S. and Philippine military forces in promoting peace and prosperity in Mindanao through education.

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STRENGTHENING EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS  
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¶3. The Ambassador met with the Mindanao State University (MSU) President, University officials, private sector partners, and local NGO representatives during a luncheon at the MSU campus to promote continued relationships for building quality education partnerships in the region. Mindanao State University has grown into an important regional school and, during her visit, the Ambassador expressed that the relationship between the University and the United States continues to strengthen. The MSU President expressed appreciation for the U.S. government's continued support of the University and their continued education partnerships. In turn, the Ambassador commended the University's support for U.S. government-funded regional programs and projects which develop the professional capabilities and technical expertise of talented local Filipino university students to enhance their employment prospects. Prior to the luncheon, the Ambassador took the opportunity to stop by the American Corner at the MSU library to emphasize the strong historic and ongoing relations within the region and the University.

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TRAINING PROJECT ENHANCES EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS  
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¶4. The Ambassador participated in the launch of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Job-Enabling English Proficiency Project whereby talented MSU students are offered English language training in preparation for competitive positions in various

technical employment sectors. Representatives of the six pilot partner colleges were present and expressed gratitude to the U.S. government as well as great excitement for the increased employability of their students. The Ambassador addressed a very enthusiastic university and media audience, and she remarked on the importance of utilizing these new resources for the increased educational and professional development of schoolchildren, out-of-school youth, and adults. She encouraged students to take advantage of the unique opportunity provided by the English Proficiency Project to build their language skills, assist their career development, and ultimately realize their fullest potential.

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EXPANDING SCHOOL LIBRARIES  
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15. The Ambassador also witnessed a book distribution of 36,000 books to 50 school libraries in Mindanao. Through an ongoing partnership between USAID, the Philippine Government, and the Children International Foundation, education matching grants are awarded to Parent-Teacher-Community Associations. Each of the 50 schools involved will receive 700 books. In her remarks during the visit, the Ambassador cited literacy programs and other education initiatives as vehicles for mobilizing local support, in partnership with the U.S. government, to strengthen educational capacity in the conflict-affected region. Her inspirational message to the students, whom she called tomorrow's leaders, urged them to continue taking advantage of educational resources. Representatives of MSU expressed gratitude for the partnership between the U.S. and the Philippines as an ongoing commitment to ensuring the prosperity of Mindanao's students.

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INCREASED TRAINING IN COMPUTER LITERACY  
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16. The Ambassador met with the Philippine Muslim Women Council (PMWC) to sign a deed of donation for USAID's turnover of several computers and computer equipment. As part of the PMWC Information Technology for Livelihood and Peace Promotion program, the Council will use the computers to train out-of-school youth and adults on basic computer literacy and computer repair. The computer donation demonstrated the U.S. government's role in the peacemaking process and sustainable development of Mindanao. The Ambassador highlighted the importance of professional development across all ages. Her signing of the deed served as a symbolic representation of the importance of computer literacy in what she noted as an "increasingly interconnected world", while the delivery of the equipment through JSOTF-P represented the strength of U.S.-Philippine civil-military relations and the high level of cooperation between our two governments.

KENNEY